

# VIRGINIA'S Leaders IN THE Law 2007

## *Kyung N. (Kathryn) Dickerson*

**Smolen Plevy**



The Asian Pacific American Bar Association of Virginia was founded by a diverse group of lawyers, intent on giving a voice to Asian-Americans practicing law in the commonwealth. But the association needed a leader who could bring this legal community together.

In 2003, the association selected Kyung (Kathryn) N. Dickerson to serve as president. APABA founders saw Dickerson, who is currently a principal with Smolen Plevy in Vienna, as an active person full of energy and enthusiasm.

For the past four years, “she has been the APABA,” said John M. Tran, who serves as general counsel and senior vice president.

This August, Dickerson ended her term as president. She now sits as chair of the board of directors and still maintains an active involvement within the association.

As a voluntary, minority-based bar association, “one of the hardest things to do is maintain a presence,” said Dickerson, especially while existing among larger regional bar associations.

To raise awareness and encourage participation, Dickerson frequently went out into the legal community. She never hesitated to approach an Asian-American lawyer to pitch APABA membership.

Additionally, she reached out to Asian students at the nearby George Mason University law school. “She was persistent in her request,” added Tran.

As a result, APABA membership grew exponentially during her term as president, according to Tran. In a community where mentorship for minorities is not easily accessible, Dickerson brought about a presence and a comfort level, and created a place where people with a common heritage could gather together

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### **BIOGRAPHY**

**Education:** B.A., University of Virginia, 1994; J.D., George Mason University School of Law, 1999

**Practice Areas:** Civil litigation, domestic relations, child custody, adoptions and divorce

**Achievement:** Completed a four-year tenure as president of the Asian Pacific American Bar Association of Virginia

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and get back to their roots, he said.

“The Asian community is unique,” Dickerson noted. Whereas various Hispanic cultures all share a common language, the Asian community as a whole is composed of many different tongues. The association has worked

with the Virginia State Bar lawyer referral service to help locate and provide interpreters and counsel for Asian-American clients hailing from various backgrounds.

“We make sure they can get the best legal representation available,” she said.

While most Asian-American lawyers in Virginia are

concentrated in the Greater DC area, Dickerson has helped create a network uniting Asian-American lawyers in Northern Virginia, Richmond and across the commonwealth. The APABA Web site, [www.apaba-va.org](http://www.apaba-va.org), also serves as a place where members can communicate with one another.

“Kathryn is the bridge

from a loose association to a Virginia presence,” said Tran. She has brought and kept the group together. “There was this emptiness before she arrived. Had she not come around, I don’t think we would still be around.”

- Sarah Rodriguez

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